



DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

News Release

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GOVERNOR

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**A SUMMER SAFETY MESSAGE FROM DLNR:
BE SAFE ON THE WATER – WATCH OUT FOR DIVE FLAGS!**

HONOLULU – The Department of Land and Natural Resources is conducting a pilot project to improve diving and boating safety in Hawai'i waters this summer.

"To help increase public awareness of safety rules concerning divers and the use of dive flags, DLNR will be giving away dive flags that meet State requirements during the summer months of June, July and August. We will also be placing informational fliers in small boat harbors and dive shops statewide," said Laura H. Thielen, DLNR chairperson.

"In recent years, DLNR has been alerted to cases in which vessels are running over dive flags while at cruising speeds. Boaters should be on the lookout for dive flags and steer well clear of them. Divers also have the responsibility of marking their dive locations. Saving lives is the reason we have this rule in place," said Thielen.

"Dive flags can sometimes be difficult to see in rough seas. It is very important for vessels operating in our waters to designate a lookout whenever possible," said Thielen. "This will help vessels avoid divers in the water, and also whales, dolphins, turtles and other marine life and large floating objects."

The flags are being given away in random, weekly drawings to Hawai'i residents.

Anyone wishing to enter the drawing for these free dive floats should send a postcard or index card in an enclosed envelope with their contact information (phone number and e-mail address) and mailing address to: Dive Flag Drawing, in care of the Division of Boating and Ocean Recreation, 333 Queen Street, Suite 300, Honolulu, Hawai'i, 96813.

Interested parties may enter as often as they wish. Limit one dive flag per person. Winners will be notified by phone or e-mail. DLNR employees and their dependents are not eligible.

"Planning for summer ocean recreation is also a good time to remember to practice safety in and on the ocean. Having and using safety gear properly, and knowing the rules can prevent accidents and save

(more)

lives, and ensure that you and other ocean users can enjoy these activities for a long time,” said Laura H. Thielen, DLNR chairperson.

The dive flags and fliers are being paid for through a grant from the U.S. Coast Guard which all states receive as mandated by law to provide boaters with safety equipment and educational information. No state funds are being used.

For more information about safe boating and diving rules, visit the Division of Boating and Ocean Recreation (DOBOR) web site at www.hawaii.gov/dlnr/dbor/ or call DOBOR on Oahu at 587-0142. To report boating or natural resources violations call 643-DLNR (3567).

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DIVE FLAG RULES:

Divers are required by law to use a dive flag when diving or swimming underwater in navigable waters of the State. Divers are also required to surface within 100’ of their flags while in open waters and within 50’ of their flags in navigable streams.

A dive flag is a red flag, measuring not less than one square foot, with a white diagonal strip running from the upper left hand corner to the lower right hand corner (from masthead to lower outside corner).

The flag may be attached to a float or mounted on the highest point of a vessel being used as a platform up to 16’ in length and visible from all directions. Vessels over 16’ must display a 20”x24” dive flag along with a blue alpha flag mounted at the highest point of the vessel and visible from all directions. An alpha flag is a blue flag with a white vertical strip running from the upper left side to the lower left side. It is the international signal for a diver down.

All vessels (boats and personal watercraft) are prohibited from approaching within 100’ of a displayed diver’s flag in open waters and 50’ in a navigable stream unless conducting SCUBA, snorkeling, or free diving activities. These vessels may approach within the restricted area of a dive flag at a speed of slow-no-wake. Failure to employ a dive flag and violating the no-approach/slow-no-wake zone around a dive flag is punishable by up to 6 months in prison and/or a fine of up to \$1,000.

30 second rip and read:

The Department of Land and Natural Resources is reminding divers and boaters to be safe this summer in Hawai‘i waters. Divers are required by law to use a dive flag when diving or swimming underwater in navigable waters and streams. Boaters and personal watercraft operators should always be on the watch for diver’s flags in the water -- someone is swimming or diving in the immediate area. Be safe in and on the ocean. Help prevent accidents, save lives, and share aloha for others.

For more information news media may contact:
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